revised at regular intervals in consultation with the concerned State Governments;

(b) if so; the details thereof;

(c) whether some State Governments have asked for enhancement in royalty rates; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) to (d) Royalty on crude oil and natural gas is notified by following the methodology finalised by Central Government in consultation with State Governments. As per this methodology, royalty on crude oil is payable at 20 per cent of the well-head price of crude oil. Upto 31.3.1998, under the Administered Pricing Mechanism for domestic Crude oil, price and royalty were fixed once in three years. After 1.4.1998, the domestic crude price has been linked to the international price of crude oil and the price and royalty are required to be fixed on monthly basis. As the international price of crude is very low at present, the same rate of royalty, which was being paid on 31.3.1998, has been continued.

Royalty on natural gas is payable at 10 per cent of its value at well-head.

Certain State Governments have asked for enhancement in the royalty rates. No decision has been taken as yet on this demand.

Allotment of LPG Agencies in Bihar

1198. SHRI JANARDAN YADAV: Will the MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of new LPG agencies allotted in Bihar during 1996-97 and 1997-98; and

(b) the target fixed for allotment of new LPG agencies in this State during 1997-98 and 1998-99?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) One LPG distributorship has been allotted in Bihar during 1996-97 and 1997-98.

(b) In addition to the locations pending from the' previous Marketing Plans, 88 new LPG distributorships have been included in the approved LPG Marketing Plan 1996-98 for Bihar. No target has been fixed for allotment of new LPG agencies for Bihar during 1997-98 and 1998-99. Actual allotment during this period will depend on various factors such as number of advertisements made, applications received, interviews held, selection of distributors and field investigation etc. made.

Gess on Diesel

1199. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the MINISTER OF PET ROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to levy a cess on diesel;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and by when the proposed levy is expected; and

(c) the rate at which the cess is to be levied and whether there would be additional cess to be levied on petroleum also?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) There is no proposal with the Government.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Hydrocarbon Exploration Programme

1200. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have drawn up programmes for the expansion of hydrocarbon during Ninth Plan;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the fund allocation made thereon;

(d) the names of the public sector oil companies which are participating in hyd-rocarbon exploration; and